



Connecticut Chapter
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Martin Mador, Legislative Chair

Planning and Development Committee
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Testimony In Favor of
HB 5780 AAC Interlocal Agreements

I am Martin Mador, 130 Highland Ave., Hamden, CT 06518. I am the volunteer Legislative Chair for the Sierra Club-Connecticut Chapter, as well as a director of Rivers Alliance and the Quinnipiac River Watershed Assn. I hold a Masters of Environmental Management degree from the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies.

The Sierra Club recognizes that atomization of Connecticut government into 169 independent children of the state, while useful in giving people a strong sense of home and place, causes a torrent of significant environmental and economic problems. It is our position that fostering municipal cooperation and regional governance is a necessary step for the well-being and future viability of our state, as well as our high environmental quality of life.

We are delighted that five of the six chairs and ranking members of this committee have already signed on as co-sponsors of this bill, as well as 22 other legislators, both senators and representatives, Democrats and Republicans.

We appreciate the language of this bill simplifying the sections of the CGS concerning interlocal agreements:

- no more complex set of rules
- no more restricted, if not somewhat inspiring, list of permitted functions

We appreciate the extension of the opportunity to participate in such agreements to municipal districts as well as towns themselves.

We note that the concept language for interlocal agreements appeared in statute in 1961. Given the few number of such agreements today, the concept has not fared well. It is now the task of both the legislature and the executive to move us boldly and rapidly to more regional governance, both through encouraging multi-municipal cooperation, and through creation of regional governance capacity. This bill is a good start. In a small way, it reminds us that we need to encourage towns to work together.

However, we must be clear. It is only a start, perhaps even a suggestion of a start. We need to do more, and sooner, not later. This legislature needs to put incentives on the table to the towns to work together. State funds should be prioritized to flow to towns who are working together. The mechanisms for sharing tasks, resources, staff, even income must be strong, accessible, and effective.

Perhaps most importantly, structures must be created to facilitate this cooperative behavior. Fortunately, such tools already exist. They are the regional Councils of Governments. COGs work well, because they are controlled and run by the mayors of the member towns. They are not new; they are not throwbacks to 1960. They exist today. We now have 15 Regional Planning Organizations, COGs, RPAs and RCEOs. We must establish incentives for the 5 Regional Planning Agencies and the 3 Councils of Elected Officials to convert to the COG format. We must encourage the towns to voluntarily reduce the resulting 15 COGs to some smaller, more efficient number. We must encourage cooperation through the COGs by sending state money to the towns via the COGs, and rewarding cooperative efforts financially. We must now start delivering current government services through the COGs, both those now delivered by towns and those delivered by state agencies.

I am a co-author with 5 colleagues of a white paper on regionalism, Regions as Partners, which will be appended to my testimony on the committee public hearing testimony web pages.

The Sierra Club thanks the Committee both for drafting this worthy bill, and for the opportunity to deliver a little 3 minute oration on regionalism.